WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 FEBRUARY 1982

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

WCHS WANTS YOU! 1982 DUES DUE

WCHS 1982 membership dues are payable to Ethelyn Morton, corresponding secretary, 2708 Brockman Blvd., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Regular membership is $8.00 per person, $15 per couple, senior citizen dues are $6 per person or $12 per couple. Sustaining membership is $50 per year; student membership, $2. Please send today. Thanks.

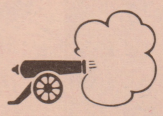
INDIAN PROGRAM SET 28TH

The January Genealogy Society meeting on Michigan Indians was postponed to 2:30 p.m. Sunday, February 28, at Washtenaw Community College. At 1 p.m., class on "Land Surveys".

JUDGE CAMPBELL SHOW POSTPONED TO MARCH 10

Judge Ross Campbell will show slides of early Washtenaw scenes at the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 10, in Room 117A, County Building.

WCHS, and other history groups invited to come. If coming, please call 994--3000 or 994--2435 days by March 3. Parking in county building lot.



CANNONBALLS HIS FORTE, NOT BASEBALLS, THEY SAY

A baseball historian says Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball and was not even in Cooperstown, New York in 1839.

According to *Collier's Encyclopedia, 1952,* Doubleday (1819--1893) was an American soldier in the Mexican, Seminole and Civil Wars. He fired the first gun in defense of Fort Sumter and served with distinction at Gettysburg where a bronze statue of him was unveiled in 1917.

BRING PICTURES OF WASHTENAW PEOPLE, SCENES, EVENTS TO SECOND WCHS PHOTO NIGHT FEBRUARY 25

Anyone with photographs, old and not-so-old, of Washtenaw County people, places and events can give them a place in history by bringing them to be copied at the second WCHS photo night.

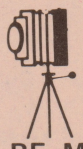
It will be at 8 p.m. Thursday, February 25, at the Salvation Army, 100 Arbana at West Huron, Ann Arbor. Sam Breck of the Historical Society of Michigan will copy and return the photos then and there, free of charge.

The negatives will be placed on file at Bentley Historical Library on the U-M North Campus where prints can be obtained for a modest fee.

Each person may bring up to eight black-and-white or color photographs not larger than 11 by 14 inches. IMPORTANT: Each picture must be accompanied by a 3 by 5 card, typed or clearly written, listing names (left to right), place, date, occasion and historical significance.

Slides and silk finish prints cannot be copied. If possible, pictures should be removed from frames.

Breck will make introductory remarks about the value of photos for historical purposes, their care and the equipment needed for copying and storing them.



SCHNEIDER BLACKSMITH SHOP TO BE MUSEUM, ACTIVITIES CENTER OF MANCHESTER SOCIETY

Manchester's last blacksmith shop and former carriage factory at 324 East Main Street is on its way to becoming a museum-activities center of the Manchester Historical Society.

The society is buying the one-story brick building, erected in 1877, from Don Limpert who developed the Black Sheep Tavern and is now working on the former feed mill.

The forge has been restored and will be used to demonstrate blacksmithing and horseshoeing, Howard Parr, Society president, says. Most of the original tools except the anvil are in the shop.

William Neebling, a manufacturer and repairer of carriages as well as a blacksmith first opened the shop after the Civil War in a frame building. Neebling came from Wurtemberg, Germany, in 1850 and served with the Ninth Michigan Cavalry in the war.

On October 30, 1877, the frame shop was moved aside and quickly replaced by the 60 by 28 foot building of today. "A gang of masons went to work and in eight days had the building ready for the carpenters," according to *Manchester: The First 100 Years, 1867--1967.* The shop had three forges.

Later owners were Theodore Morschheuser, John Schneider and Carl Schaffer. Schneider was last to operate a blacksmith shop in the village that once had eight blacksmiths. He learned the trade in the same shop where he worked for 41 years until his death in 1952.

Former Governor John Swainson is chairman of a year long fund drive to pay for the building. Anyone interested in assisting may call Swainson, 428-8009, or Parr, 428-9233.

'WHEN DETROIT WAS YOUNG' TO BE MARCH 27 TOPIC

A rare film, "When Detroit Was Young," will be shown at the March 25 WCHS meeting by Ray Spokes.

The film was made from tintypes and other pictures in the vast Burton Collection of the Detroit Public Library on the centennial of the Burton Abstract Company. Spokes thinks his is the only copy.

BASEBALL'S RAY FISHER

BLACKLISTING CLOUDS OUTSTANDING CAREER

The oldest living former New York Yankee baseball player. A pitcher for Cincinnati in the infamous 1919 World Series. University of Michigan baseball coach 1921 -- 1958, whose teams won nine Big Ten Championships and shared four others.

The list goes on — "College Baseball Coach of the Year" in 1953 when his team won the College World Series. Michigan Sports Hall of Fame, College Baseball Hall of Fame. Since 1964, a U-M scholarship in his name given annually to the person voted by teammates "Most Valuable Player". In 1970 the U-M rededicated its baseball stadium in his name.

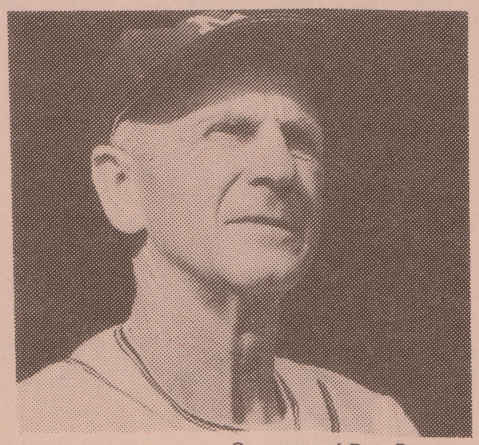
A remarkable list of accomplishments and accolades. They all belong to Ray Lyle Fisher, a 94-year-old Ann Arborite. In spite of all the honors a cloud hangs over his name — he was blacklisted from organized baseball for life back in 1921 in part because he took the U-M coaching job.

That incident was the subject of the January WCHS meeting. The speaker, Dr. Donald J. Proctor, professor of history at the U-M Dearborn campus, believes it was unjustified.

It's a complex story. He sketched in the background, the highlights of Fisher's career and blacklisting and showed slides spanning the coach's career from Vermont farm boyhood through Fisher's visit to his 70th class reunion at Middlebury College in 1980. Fisher is the only living member of the Class of 1910.

Dr. Proctor also passed out copies of his article in 1981 *Baseball Research Journal,* "The Blacklisting of Baseball's Ray Fisher," and an earlier two-part article in the summer and fall 1980 *Ann Arbor Scene,* "Ray L. Fisher: Michigan's Captive Coach."

The articles have sparked an effort to clear Fisher's name. They were picked up by the Associated



Courtesy of Don Proctor

Coach Fisher's pitching into his seventies still fooled batters.

Press in New York and even former President Gerald Ford wrote a letter to Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn asking him to clear the record. Ford was center on Fisher's 1931 freshman football team. (Freshman football was another one of Fisher's responsibilities at Michigan.)

Dr. Proctor's specialty is late 19th and early 20th century United States history, especially government regulation of corporations, he explained. That was a time of merger and trustbusting.

U.S. Steel was formed in 1901. Two years later today's two major leagues of baseball merged. In 1907 Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis fined Standard Oil of Indiana $29,240,000 for violating the Elkins Act and gained a national reputation as a trust buster. He later became baseball commissioner.

While researching a biography of Landis, Proctor ran across Landis's decision about Fisher, a man he knew and thought, "How could a sweet guy like that be blacklisted for life?"

The Cincinnati Reds for whom Fisher had been pitching had been the first professional ball team in 1869. The National League was formed in 1876. In 1903, Byron Bancroft (Ban) Johnson, a Cincinnati newspaperman, almost singlehandedly forced the National League to recognize the American League, that is, recognize their reserve clause or the hold they had over their players. Playoffs between the leagues — the "World Series" — began then.

The National League had used a standard player contract with reserve clause since 1879. "The reserve clause bound a player to a baseball club as long as that club wanted to utilize the player."

From 1903 the ultimate enforcer of the reserve clause was a three-man commission composed of the presidents of the American and National Leagues and a third person the two agreed on as chairman.

When Fisher began negotiating with the Reds, his boss-to-be, August (Garry) Herrmann, president of the Reds and fellow Cincinnatian Ban Johnson, American League president, had served on the commission since its inception, Herrmann as chairman.

In 1913 a third major league, the Federal League, tried to get going by enticing players in the other two leagues to jump their contracts. The established leagues got injunctions to prevent it because of the reserve clause — in effect, "you have to play for us or you can't play for anyone."

The Federal League sued organized baseball in 1915, contending the reserve clause was contrary to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. They picked Landis's court because of his trust-busting reputation.

Landis sat on the case for 11 months. Finally it was settled out of court with the Federal League being dissolved. Six years later Landis was named the first baseball commissioner, replacing the former three-man commission which had become inactive. Fisher's problem came up only about six months after Landis took the job and had been faced with the Black Sox scandal which he had decided arbitrarily.

Fisher was born October 4, 1887, near Middlebury, Vermont. His Middlebury College coach, Cy Stackpole, an old minor league professional, saw Fisher's potential and arranged a tryout with Hartford (Connecticut).

Fisher pitched for Hartford two summers before graduating from Middlebury in 1910 and signing with the New York Highlanders who soon became the Yankees. He played with them for eight seasons until being drafted for a year of military service. While with the Yankees, "batting masters Ty Cobb of Detroit and Nat Lajoie of Cleveland picked Fisher as being one of the 12 best pitchers in the American League."

While in the Army Fisher's contract was sold to the Cincinnati Reds. That year, 1919, Cincinnati won the National League pennant and the World Series, defeating the Chicago White Sox. Fisher pitched in two games of the series.

In September 1920 eight Chicago players were accused of throwing the 1919 World Series to collect $100,000 from gamblers in what was dubbed the "Black Sox Scandal".

Fisher had taken a pay cut at Cincinnati. Paycuts about which he could do little contributed to growing disenchantment and by summer 1920, Fisher began looking for a college coaching job. He talked to Branch Rickey, then president and field manager of the St. Louis Cardinals and former Michigan coach 1910--13.

Unknown to Fisher, Rickey had already recommended Derrill (Del) Pratt, then Yankee second baseman who earlier played for the St. Louis Browns when Rickey was their manager.

Pratt came but didn't stay long. On Saturday, April 2, 1921, the *Michigan Daily* reported Pratt was considering an offer from the Boston Red Sox. Fisher read it in another paper next day and moved fast. He wired the U-M and asked Pat Moran, team manager, for permission to go to Ann Arbor.

Monday, April 4, the Regents released Pratt and the U-M wired Fisher. Wednesday, after the final exhibition game in Indianapolis Fisher left to meet with U-M officials the next day. They wanted him right away because the U-M team was to leave the next evening for its annual spring vacation trip south and Pratt was leaving the team at Atlanta.

Friday morning, April 8, Fisher met with Herrmann in Cincinnati, a week before the April 15 season opener. Fisher said he would voluntarily retire and picked up the phone on Herrmann's desk and called to accept the U-M job. Ray also offered to return after college baseball season in early June if Herrmann wanted him.

That afternoon the *Cincinnati Post* reported that Ray "asked to be released from his contract. . . . President Herrmann agreed to place him on the voluntarily retired list." The New York Times ran it next day.

But Herrmann soon had second thoughts. On April 21, 1921, he wrote to the president of the National League that Fisher had notified him "the *day before* the season opened . . . .We have not given this player his release, and the question arises whether we should put him on the Voluntary Retired List or place him on the Ineligible List for violation of contract."

On May 21, when Michigan was in Chicago to play the University of Chicago, Ray went to see Commissioner Landis. He briefly explained how Herrmann had declared him ineligible for taking the Michigan coaching job despite manager Pat Moran's permission to visit Ann Arbor and the published announcement from Herrmann's office that Fisher had been placed on the voluntary retired list. Landis agreed to look into it.

Dick Reuss Collection

Then New York Yankee pitcher Ray Fisher on 1911 tobacco card.

A week later Ray called Landis. Landis said he had been told that Ray had agreed to play in an outlaw Pennsylvania league. Fisher said that was not so. He had had an unsolicited call from them but "if you blacklist me I'm going to have to play somewhere."

Landis wrote Moran June 2 and Moran's answer unequivocally denied he had given Fisher permission to leave. Landis denied reinstatement and telegraphed Fisher he had been placed permanently on the ineligible list. Fisher called the Franklin team and said he would report immediately.

Fisher suspects Moran, who had limited formal education, did not write the letter to Landis. He thinks probably Herrmann wrote it. And the Commissioner apparently accepted Herrmann's version uncritically.

"To appreciate what might have contributed to Herrmann's change of mind one must view the interplay between him and Ray Fisher within the broad sweep of affairs that was shaking the very foundations of baseball," Proctor wrote.

"Seen from that vantage point, Ray is reduced to a pawn. He had the misfortune of being caught in the middle of a pair of successive power struggles . . . . As a result Ray was whiplashed onto baseball's blacklist."

Commissioner Kuhn wrote that he considered Fisher "a retired player in good standing" but Proctor contends that Fisher's lifetime ineligibility is still listed in recent baseball reference works.

Fisher still lives in Ann Arbor. His wife Alice, and only child, Janet, who was the first Mrs. John Leidy are dead. His grandson, John Leidy, Jr., is among those wanting to clear Fisher's name once and for all.

THEY PLAYED BASEBALL AT VALLEY FORGE, 1778

The story that baseball was invented by Abner Doubleday in 1839 in Cooperstown, New York, was discredited as a myth by Robert W. Henderson in *Ball, Bat and Bishop,* 1947.

He traces it to English roots and says that the future King George III played a form of the game in 1748 and so did Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge in 1778.

CITY PUTS COBBLESTONE IN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ann Arbor City Council recently voted unanimously to extend Ann Arbor historic district code protection to the 138-year-old Cobblestone Farm, 2781 Packard Road at Buhr Park. The designation guarantees the building's architecture will not be significantly altered.

YPSI ELECTS HOWARD

LaVerne Howard was elected president of Ypsilanti Historical Society. Mrs. Frank Burgess is vice-president.

Elected to the board were Carl Worley, David Gauntlett, Phoebe Miller and Mrs. James Campbell. Sharon Patterson, archivist, will continue as secretary and Fred Peters as treasurer. Both those positions are appointive.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663--8826
Keylining: Anna Thorsch
Printing: Whiz Print
Mailing: Ethelyn Morton, 662-2634

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. second Monday, March 8th meeting at the home of President Jean Storey, 216 Jefferson Street. Area farmers Glen Wiseman and Ray Schairer will talk about "Farming Then and Now" and show pictures. Visitors welcome.

Dexter Historical Society — 8 p.m. first Thursday at museum, 3443 Inverness.

Annual pioneer craft fair, 10 a.m.--4 p.m. Saturday, March 20, at Dexter High School. Between 55 and 60 craft persons will demonstrate everything from chair seat splinting to maple sugar making. Entertaining — a harpist, Percy Danforth and his bones and the Cobblestone Dancers. Admission $1 donation. Lunch served by Heritage Guild.

Manchester Historical Society — 8 p.m. third Monday, Emanuel Church. March 15, a panel of members and guests comparing "The Workaday World of Women 100 Years Ago and Today."

Milan Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House, 775 County Street.

Northfield Township Historical Society — Using a survey of rural township homes and buildings built before 1940 done by EMU student Joan Barber, the sites committee is trying to get more information on the buildings. Ms. Barber is to complete a survey of Whitmore Lake Village this summer.

Saline Historical Society — The program on Meredith Bixby's Marionettes will be at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 21, at Bixby's headquarters in the Saline Depot. Call Wendy Blackie, president, 429--9710 to confirm.

Webster Historical Society — 7:45 p.m. first Monday at homes. March topic, "How To Get Started on Family Research," by Nancy Blaricum, Dexter society genealogist, at the Gardners, 5566 Webster Church Road. Visitors welcome.

DON'T FORGET WCHS, MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Don't forget to mark 8 p.m. the fourth Thursday of the month as Washtenaw County Historical Society meeting night September through May except November and December when the fourth Thursday is usually too close to the holidays.

HOME SHOW APRIL 2--4, WCHS OFFERED BOOTH

WCHS has been offered a free booth at the Home and Leisure Living Show April 2--4 but John Danovich, show promoter, does not expect to have room for the auction this year.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8 p.m. THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25, 1982

SALVATION ARMY CITADEL

West Huron at Arbana
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Non-Profit Org.
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